

with him? If he so willed, he could build you a palace of golden ounces."

"One of the herdsmen once gave me a nightingale; the lattice that held him prisoner was a gilded one, but the poor bird pined for the branches of the pinion tree, and the flowers of the prairie; he beat his wings against his prison bars until his heart broke; and then he found freedom in the grave. The arms of the man I could not love would be prison bars to me; like the bird, I should struggle to escape. Gold is powerful, father, but love more powerful still."

"And do you love?" cried the father, quickly.

For a second a glance of fire shone in Giralda's dark eyes, and then the ebony-fringed lids hid them from view.

"I love—" she said, slowly, "yes, I love you, father."

"And no one else?" he demanded, quickly.

"Who else should I love?" she replied, softly.

"You are playing with me, Giralda," the old man said, sternly. "I have eyes, and I know you too well to be deceived. You object to the suit of Ferdinand Tordilla, because you fancy some one else."

But, father, if I understand you rightly, you urge me to accept Ferdinand because he is the richest man in our province—"

"No, no!" cried the father, quickly, "not solely for that reason alone, although of course it has weight; but he is also young, handsome, a dashing cavalier, fit mate for beauty. Do not think, my child, that I wish you to wed a money-bag. Look around upon the young men of our province; is there one of them that can compare with Ferdinand?"

"But if I do not care for him?"

"Tut! you do not know your own mind. You are but a butterfly passing from flower to flower, with no thought except for the present. Tordilla's wealth will buy you every thing that heart can desire."

"Except peace of mind," Giralda said, dryly.

"That is a fantasy!" cried the father, impatiently.

"Why should I covet his wealth when I am the heiress to Bandera? When, far as the eye can reach, east, west, north and south, all that I look upon will one day be mine? If report speaks truth, few estates in all Mexico are larger than Bandera; and the beautiful girl raised her head with a gesture of pride as she spoke.

"Suppose some sudden blow should rob you of these broad acres, what then?" the old man asked, meaningly.

"That can never be," the girl replied, confidently. "Who can destroy yonder prairie, drive off the herds of cattle that fatten on its surface, or remove the ounces of gold that the bankers of Mexico hold to your credit?"

"Five hundred paces from the hacienda rolls the Rio Sego; it is calm and placid, now, a child might brave its power; yet I have seen it, a giant in strength, sweeping along the mighty pinion trees, and the tall cottonwoods on its bosom as though they were but straws. Some day the Sego may rise again and spread desolation and despair along its banks. Then, too, a hundred miles to the north there dwells a race of feather-garnished warriors; their skins are red, their hearts not white. The great Comanche chief, whom his brethren call the White Mustang, has sworn never to rest while the hacienda of Bandera guards the approach to Dhanis. Some day the red chiefs will come with fire and steel, and then, the vulture and the wolf will make their home here."

"I do not fear, father," replied the girl, proudly. "The Comanches came last year, but when they retreated many an Indian pony who had borne a living warrior, carried a dead one."

"Yes, but since that time, the White Mustang has become the chief of the tribe; and he is by far the ablest warrior in all the Comanche nation."

"Still I do not fear."

"Perhaps there may be another claimant to the estate. You know that it came to me by my brother's death," the father said, slowly.

"You can not frighten me, father," replied Giralda, smiling. "I know that such a thing can not be. You only say this to make me accept the suit of Ferdinand."

"Time will tell you whether your suspicion be true or false," and there was a grave look on the stern face of the old man as he spoke. "Giralda, do not attempt to deceive me; I know the reason why Ferdinand's suit is distasteful to you. That reason did not exist three days ago."

"Do you think so, father?" and there was a half-smile on Giralda's proud face as she spoke.

"Yes, for just three days ago, the American, whom the herdsmen call Gilbert the Mustang, came to Dhanis."

A burning blush swept over Giralda's face, and the long lashes closed down over the dark eyes.

An angry look clouded the face of the Mexican as he watched the play of Giralda's features.

"If I had doubted, your face now would have removed my doubts," he said, with a bitter accent. "For the sake of this unknown adventurer, whose only future lies in his rifle, his hunting-knife and lasso, you reject the hand of the richest gentleman in all our province. By the saints, girl, I swear you are mad! What witchcraft lies in the blue eyes of this American that should fascinate you at the first glance, as the snake fascinates the bird?"

Giralda did not reply, but her glowing cheeks and downcast eyes betrayed her secret.

"Girl, I would rather see you in your grave than married to this American adventurer," the father exclaimed, harshly.

"Banish him from your thoughts, for with my consent you shall never see him again."

Without a word, Giralda rose and left the apartment, but the expression upon her face boded defiance rather than submission.

An angry frown was upon Bandera's brow as he watched the heavy door close after his daughter's light form.

"I shall have some trouble in bending her to my will," he muttered, "but she must obey. The blow may fall at any time which robs us of these broad acres and makes us beggars."

A servant conducting a stranger into the apartment interrupted the meditations of the old man.

Looking up, Bandera beheld a rather shabbily dressed man, whose garments were covered with dust. In person the stranger was above the medium height, and his massive and well-knit frame gave promise of great strength; his face was handsome, lit

up by great black eyes, fringed by coal-black hair, worn long, and falling in wavy masses down along his neck; a long narrow mustache graced his upper lip. The face of the stranger bore evident marks of toil and exposure to sun and wind. There was a rakish look about the man that betrayed the adventurer in every movement; cruel lines about the eyes and mouth that told of fierce animal passions.

Bandera gazed with astonishment upon the new-comer.

The stranger nodded familiarly to the Mexican, and then addressed the servant.

"Son of my heart, you needn't wait—you can get out—vamoose! Your master and I have business to transact in private."

In wonder the servant withdrew, while Bandera asked himself if it was a madman who stood before him.

"You do not remember me, eh?" the stranger asked, with a smile, which revealed his white, fang-like teeth.

"No."

"That is wonderful," the stranger exclaimed, mockingly. "Allow me to introduce myself. I am called Lope, the Panther by my friends; by the world at large, Senior Don Lope, a gentleman of limited means but of large expectations. I sometimes tell stories—wonderful stories! I can tell of a hacienda attacked at midnight by a band of Indians whose leader wore a white skin; of a man killed by the one who should have given his own life in his defense; of a lovely mother falling beneath the knives of the savages; of two helpless children sold to death. Oh! it's a wonderful full story!"

"Do I do not care to hear it?" Bandera exclaimed, impatiently.

"Oh! do you not?" asked the stranger, sarcastically; "not care to hear of the wonderful escape of the two babes—how they grew to age, and then came to claim the estates of Bandera?"

"Ah!" the Mexican started to his feet in astonishment.

CHAPTER III.

THE PANTHER'S OFFER.

The adventurer looked at the Mexican, a peculiar smile on his bronzed features.

"Aha! it's getting interesting, isn't it?" he asked, mockingly.

Bandera, frowning scowled upon the stranger, but replied not.

"Oh, you need not look at me that way!"

The "Panther" cried; sneeringly. "I have faced angry men before now, and they had gleaming steel in their hands, too, and brown muzzled weapons of death, but I quailed not. By the way, señor, you are strangely lacking in hospitality; you haven't even invited me to be seated. *Voto-a-briis*, I'll help myself to a chair, since you forget to offer me one."

And then the adventurer coolly sat down, extended his legs lazily along the floor, thrust his hands in his pockets, and laughed in the face of the Mexican.

With a powerful effort Bandera choked back the rage that was swelling in his heart.

"You spoke of some one coming to claim the estates of Bandera," he said, again seating himself.

"Exactly."

"What do you know of this affair?"

"Every thing."

"You will excuse me if I doubt that."

"In five minutes I will remove your doubts," said the adventurer, confidently.

"Do you think that possible?"

"Listen to my wonderful story, and judge."

"Go on."

"Twenty years ago, Juan de Bandera, your cousin, possessed the vast estates now held by you."

"There is nothing wonderful in that statement," interrupted Bandera, "that fact is known to all who resided in this neighborhood twenty years ago."

"Don't be impatient, and don't interrupt me, or you will make me lose the thread of my story," replied the adventurer, coolly.

"You know that good! Many other people know it better! Before I get through, I'll tell you something that neither you nor anybody else knows. I alone, and no other living soul, possesses the wonderful secret."

"I am waiting," said Bandera, dryly.

"Your wisdom does you credit; I am the herdsman. To speak more plainly, I am the man who holds the destinies of the estates of Bandera in his hand," and the adventurer closed his broad palm significantly as he spoke.

"I do not understand you," Bandera said, doubtfully.

"The saints forbid that I should tell you that you lie, to your teeth and in your own house, but you do, never-the-less," the Panther said, coolly.

"You know what I am going to say well enough. I can produce the heir to Bandera; I can wrest the estates from you. How much will you give to have me keep back this heir?"

"Heir—there were two."

"Exactly, but I've only got one, the girl."

"And the boy?"

"Who knows?"

"To dispute the estates with me you will require undoubted proof that the person you produce is really the heir." Just a little bit of a sneer was in Bandera's voice.

"I generally look at my cards before I play," the Panther replied, smilingly.

"When I escaped with the two babes I placed them in secure hands; had an account of the whole affair drawn up, and took such measures that, in after years, I could easily prove the identity of the two children."

"And the person with whom you placed the two?"

"Oh! of course I shall tell you that I and the adventurer laughed long and loudly."

"Well, it is not of the slightest consequence to me," Bandera said, carelessly.

"Oh, no!" and the Panther laughed again; "my worthy and esteemed friend, I have dealt with tricky men before. I am playing for a great stake here, and I don't intend to lose a single point of the game."

"To business, then," Bandera said, abruptly.

"Yes."

"And for a certain sum you will agree to destroy all the proofs by means of which she can claim the estates?"

"Yes," and the adventurer rubbed his hands together gleefully; "it is really a pleasure to do business with a man like yourself."

"What are your terms?"

"Oh, a mere nothing," replied the Panther, carelessly. "I am tired of knocking about the world; I have been a football for fortune long enough. I would fain settle down; the life of a landed proprietor would suit me exactly. So just give me your daughter in marriage, make me the heir to the estates of Bandera, and I shall be satisfied."

Bandera sprung to his feet in wrath; his eyes fairly blazed with rage.

"Give my child to you, cutthroat adventurer!" he cried. "Son of the devil, hence, or I'll have you dashed from my doors! I defy you and your tale of lies!"

For a moment Lope looked at the Mexican, astonished at the sudden outbreak; then he slowly rose to his feet.

"You defy me, eh?" he said, through his clenched teeth.

"Begone, beggar!" cried the angry father.

"Beggar! that is what you will be within a month, for within that time I'll strip you of the estates of Bandera."

Another moment and the Panther was gone.

"Exactly; Juan Bandera, in disgust, left the gay world, and sought for consolation amid the wild-flowers of the prairie. His penniless cousin kept a close watch upon him. Not content with robbing him of his heart's idol, he thirsted after his broad acres. He thought that despair might kill; but Juan de Bandera took the most cruel revenge."

In a hunting excursion on the prairie, he found a young Indian girl. She was but a child, barely fifteen. She had been badly wounded by a fierce buffalo. The Mexican took her home, cured her hurt, then married her. When the news of the marriage was brought to your ears—I beg ten thousand pardons, señor, I mean to be like yours, that half the time I think you are the man.

"Well, as I have said, when the news reached him, he swore a bitter oath, and within two more years he swore more bitterly still, for a son and daughter were born to him. Few men would have thought of such a terrible deed, fewer still would have executed it, but he did. Now, señor, comes the tragedy. The night is dark, the stars in the sky are hidden behind a cloud; the war-whoop of the Comanche sounds around the hacienda of Bandera; white-skinned Indians, decked in the garb and in the war-paint of the prairie chiefs, rush to the attack. Juan de Bandera, like a second Abel, fell by the hand of a second Cain; only, in this case, it was a cousin instead of a brother. The wife died, pierced to the heart by a random shot, but the two children—"

"Perished also, I suppose," interrupted Bandera, with a covert glance in the face of the adventurer.

"Did they?" and the Panther laughed; "my story says different. A herdsman attached to the household of Juan Bandera, with the two babes in his arms, escaped the attack, and on a fleet horse sought safety, and found it, on the prairie. This herdsman was a cunning knave; he knew how broad were the acres of Bandera; how valuable, in time to come the heirs would be. He guessed, too, from whom came the blow that cost Juan Bandera his life. So he placed the two babes in safety, and sought for fortune elsewhere. Years came and went; now the herdsman has returned; he thinks it's time that the world should understand who are the heirs of Bandera. Take a good look at me, señor; I am something older than I was twenty years ago; somewhat more brawny in muscle and darker in color, but I feel sure that you will remember me."

"You are the herdsman," Bandera said, slowly.

"Your wisdom does you credit; I am the herdsman. To speak more plainly, I am the man who holds the destinies of the estates of Bandera in his hand," and the adventurer closed his broad palm significantly as he spoke.

"I do not understand you," Bandera said, doubtfully.

"The saints forbid that I should tell you that you lie, to your teeth and in your own house, but you do, never-the-less," the Panther said, coolly.

"You know what I am going to say well enough. I can produce the heir to Bandera; I can wrest the estates from you. How much will you give to have me keep back this heir?"

"You think that, that you can read my thoughts in my face?" Gilbert asked.

"'Bout what?" asked Crockett, shrewdly.

"Well, not any thing particular."

"And a gal in gen'ral," interrupted the hunter.

Jist a little shade of annoyance passed over the face of the Panther.

"Why you think that?" he asked.

"Thunder! think I'm a dod-rotted fool—lost my eyesight, eh? Why, Gil, I kin read your face just as easy as a coon takes to a hollow tree, when three darkies and a yaller dog is arter him. I never do guess much, you know; be sure you're right, then go ahead; that's my motto!"

"You think, then, that you can read my thoughts in my face?" Gilbert asked.

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thee; and thou, stout men-at-arms, who ride at Liderick's command, mourn for thy leader, for the ax of the "Wolf" has bit deep into the morion of the trusty soldier!

On pushed Ludwig and his band, bearing the lovely Anna—on through the darkness of the night. Deep they spur; fast they ride; until before them they see the dark towers of Enhoven.

Anna had revived during the flight. Better for her, perhaps, had she never woken again, for she was a helpless victim in the hands of her father's deadliest foe.

The party dismounted and entered the castle. Anna was given in charge of two women, the wives of some of the Free Lances, and they conveyed her to a spacious and well-furnished apartment. Refreshments were set before her, which the women pressed her to eat; but her thoughts were far removed from mere bodily comforts. Her mind returned again and again to her lover, stricken down helpless at her feet. In agony she asked herself if they were never to meet again. Not until this moment did she fully realize how much and how truly she loved him.

Meanwhile Ludwig was among his assembled soldiers in the great hall of the castle, where the wassail ring loud and long.

A motley crew were these soldiers of fortune—Free Lances, as they were termed—men who fought for hire, and whose life and being hung on their swords. All nations of Europe were represented in that band. Here was the ruddy-faced Englishman who had fought under the Red Cross banner on many a bloody field; here the mercurial Frenchman, who would risk limb and life for the sake of boasting of some fair lady's kiss; here the yellow-haired and sluggish Fleming, the swarthy Spaniard, and Italy's dark son, who many a tale could tell of foul assassination and secret poison; cutthroats, outcasts from their country and their kin, and yet, withal, good soldiers.

A shout of welcome greeted the entrance of their chief. Ruffian-like, they respected and feared him, because he was the stronger. As has been said, few soldiers in Germany were as good as Ludwig, the Wolf of Enhoven.

"Free Lances of Enhoven!" and the clear voice of Ludwig resounded through the hall, "the men-at-arms of Cleves, of Gueldres and of Hanault are gathering in yonder city, to assault our tower. Arnold of Gueldres has forgotten the fate of his soldiers two years ago when they ran like whipped curs from the shadow of our fortalice, and sought for refuge within the walls of their accursed city. The best soldier that they boast, stout Liderick du Bucq, will not lead the lances of Gueldres against the tower of Enhoven, for he has felt the teeth of the "Wolf" this night, and 'tis not likely he'll ever draw sword again."

A wild shout declared the pleasure of the outlaws; they had not forgotten the prowess of the young soldier, two years before, and since that time they had witnessed the flash of his long rapier in many a petty skirmish, and never had they encountered him but defeat and disaster had befallen them.

Ludwig smiled grimly as he beheld the effect of his words. He continued:

"Followers of the 'Wolf,' the men of Gueldres to-morrow will seek us in Enhoven's tower. If we beat them, ere a month has passed, we'll seek them in the town of Gueldres; and the sluggish burghers will tremble when they hear the howl of the 'Wolf' ringing through their streets."

Again a wild shout from the Free Lances; and visions of plunder and riot in helpless and sacked Gueldres danced before their eyes.

"These noble gentlemen have sworn to give us no quarter; so, take no prisoners in the coming fight, but kill all, whether burgher or gentle," said the "Wolf" fiercely. "Stuifnel, send out scouts to give us warning of the approach of the foe," and, with this order, the "Wolf" left them to his prisoner.

Stuifnel, though, did not obey at once; he had been absent in the city for fully a month, acting as a spy. Ludwig, for nearly a year, had been scheming to abduct Anna, the fame of whose beauty resounded throughout all Brabant. Of course the spy had much to tell his comrades, so that nearly an hour passed before he obeyed the order of Ludwig, and dispatched the scouts. That delay worked a wondrous change in the fortunes of the "Wolf," as will be seen hereafter.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SURPRISE.

LUDWIG passed to an anteroom, and removed his helmet. Let us describe him as he stands there in all the pride of manhood and of strength.

The "Wolf" had seen perhaps twenty-five years, though care and the toil of warfare made him look much older. His face was large, and of the pure German type. A bluish-gray eye, with a glance as quick and piercing as that of a hawk; a large nose, hooked like the beak of an eagle; small, thin lips, closely compressed together, half hid by a long yellow mustache, while a pointed beard of the same hue covered his chin. His hair was a golden yellow, worn long, and falling almost to his shoulders, with ends curled under.

As we have said, Ludwig's face was purely German, as was also his name; and yet, his spurs were won, and his fame first made in Italy, of which it was said he was a native. If this were so, his was a strange face for an Italian.

He opened the door and entered the room wherein sat the prisoner, fair Anna of Gueldres. She started at his approach, and gazed curiously upon him, with looks unmixed with apprehension. The two women retired.

"Lady, I trust you have recovered from your fright?" said the "Wolf," courteously.

"Yes, sir," replied Anna. "You are Ludwig of Enhoven?" she then asked, for the "Wolf" had often been described to her, and she recognized the likeness.

"So I am called, lady."

"Why have I been dragged from my home? What wrong have I ever done to you that you should commit this outrage?" questioned Anna.

"Fair lady, you have never wronged me, and most humbly I crave your pardon for this act."

"Your motive, then?"

"A few words will explain," said the robber chief. "Over all our land—throughout Flanders and Brabant, ay, even in France itself—Anna, of Gueldres, is spoken of as being the fairest maiden that e'er the sun looked upon. Not only do they call you beautiful, lady, but they say that the gentleness and goodness of your disposition

are equaled only by the beauty of your face."

Thus spoke the "Wolf," in, for him, a singularly winning tone. Anna blushed, and her eyes sought the ground in visible confusion, at these warm praises; but a few more words from Ludwig and she raised her head, with a tinge of anger burning on her cheeks.

"Half Germany said 'Anna d' Egmont is the loveliest lady in our land,' and the other half said 'Ludwig, of Enhoven, is the bravest lance.' I do not say this in compliment to you, but only to explain my position. What then more natural than that Ludwig should fall in love with Anna, although he had never seen her, and that he should desire her for his wife?"

"Oh, your wife?" cried Anna.

"Yes, lady, with the aid of some good, holy monk, and your consent."

"That you shall never have!" said Anna, impetuously.

"Then I'll do without it," said the "Wolf" coolly. "I fain would have come to Gueldres openly, and pressed my suit, but that your father and I are not on good terms. For the last time he visited me, two years ago, I gave him such a warm reception that, but for the young soldier, whom I struck down beneath my ax, he would have stayed here forever, and found a snug resting-place in the mout at the base of my walls. Therefore, to win you was but one way, and that was to use the cunning and the strength of the wolf, whose name I bear."

"No priest will dare to wed the daughter of Gueldres' Count to an outlaw such as you are!" said Anna, all her father's spirit speaking in her voice.

"A man will do much to save his life; and every monk that falls within my hands, that refuses to perform the ceremony, shall die."

"Oh, you have no heart?" pleaded Anna, tears filling her eyes.

"Yes, a heart that is full of love for thee; that, such love as I can feel, which is not much, I own. Still, such as it is, all shall be thine. I like thee, Anna, although I never before set eyes upon thee. Thou hadst best consent freely to the union, for I tell thee frankly—mine thou shalt be, with the rites of the church, if thou wilt consent; without them, if thou dost refuse; but in either case I will possess thee; and if thou will not listen to reason, then force shall accomplish my object. I would not deceive thee, Anna, even to save my soul, which the worthy monks say is in Satan's keeping already. I have told you what you may expect; so be prepared to abide the consequences!"

"Villain!" cried Anna, feeling that she was indeed helpless in his power; "to-morrow the troops of Gueldres come, and they will tear me from thy hands!"

"To-morrow! ho! ho!" laughed the "Wolf," and the harsh tones grated fearfully on the ear of his destined victim. "To-morrow will be too late to save thee from my arms. To-night will see thee mine, forever. An' thy father's troops will save thee, they must make the attempt ere the world be half an hour older!"

"Oh, man! man! have you no pity?" pleaded poor Anna, sinking upon her knees with clasped hands.

"Pity? pity?" questioned the "Wolf" in a tone full of anger and of menace; "pity to any human being, in whose veins runs the blood of D'Egmont, or was born in yonder town of Gueldres? No!"

From the first hour that the land of Brabant saw the gleam of my lances, or heard my war-cry pealing on the air, no man, woman or child of Gueldres, ever fell within my hands, that I did not shed their blood. You are the first from that accursed city, that I ever spared. And why do I spare you?" questioned the "Wolf," his eyes flashing fire, and a deep frown upon his brow, "you, the daughter—the only child of my deadliest foe—you, in whose veins runs the blood of Arnold D'Egmont, Gueldres' Count? Why do I spare you?" he repeated with fierce emphasis. "Listen and I will tell. I hate your father as hotly as does the prince of darkness the angels above. I know that he would rather have you dead than have you mine. I feel that it will wound him more than even a dagger struck to his heart. But if I make you my lawful bride by the rites of the church, at your father's death I will claim Gueldres as his son-in-law and heir; will back that claim, if need be, by a thousand lances!" and the tone of the "Wolf" swelled with triumphant exultation.

"You will not dare!" said Anna, sick at heart with terror.

"Will I not? When the time comes you shall see. In my short life I have dared many things—not the least of which was bearing you off, this night, from Gueldres, right between the teeth of its lances."

"Mercy! mercy!" pleaded Anna. "Why should you hate my father and his city so bitterly?"

"Why? I will tell you. Men call me an adventurer! a cutthroat! a ruffian leader of ruffian Free Lances! and yet my blood is as good and my descent as high as any prince in Germany. Anna, didst thou ever hear the story of Albert of Enhoven, the former lord of this tower and domain?"

"Yes," replied Anna; "he was a traitor to his country."

"That is the lie current in Gueldres!" cried the "Wolf," angrily; "because, forsooth, he claimed the right to think for himself and joined the Spaniards instead of the French! And then, when his allies like cowards deserted him, with his kinsmen and his followers he retired to this, his ancestral tower. Then, soon, around it gathered every lance that could be raised in Brabant and Flanders, all hounded on by your father, Arnold D'Egmont, crying 'traitor'! Ten to one, the assailants at last overpowered the little band of defenders, and the tower was won by assault. Then came the scene of carnage and of slaughter. 'No quarter to the traitors' was the cry of Gueldres and the league! Here, in this chamber, the last struggle took place. Here, Albert of Enhoven and a few kinsmen, hearts of stone, died trampling the last chance for life. One by one they fell beneath the press of numbers, and, fighting to the bitter end, Albert of Enhoven was stricken down by the sword of your father. His only son, a boy of fifteen, was down by his father's side, mortally wounded as it was thought. The victors paused, for there were no more to slay, and the line of Enhoven was extinct. But the boy was not dead; he only feigned death, for his wound was slight. When the assassins, for they were so, left the room, he ran to that window, jumped from it into the moat, forty feet below. The water broke his fall, and he escaped unharmed. Then he fled to Italy; and, boy though he was, joined a band of Free Lances. Time passed on

—the stripling became a man; the soldier became a captain; and then he determined to return and claim his ancestral halls again. The band of Free Lances that he led were hardy soldiers, and well they backed that claim. Anna of Gueldres, can you not guess now who I am? Men call me Ludwig of Enhoven, and they do so rightly, for my name is Ludwig, I am count Albert's son, and lord of Enhoven!"

Ludwig heard this strange story with terror, and her heart sunk within her. Now she knew why the "Wolf" bore such a hatred to Gueldres and to her father. Alas! poor Anna, what shall save thee?

"Come!" said the "Wolf," "our bridal rites wait. Passion and vengeance alike cry for thee."

Ludwig advanced toward her; poor Anna was helpless with terror.

"Hanault and Gueldres, strike on!"

ran the war-cry of the league, right in the court-yard of Enhoven castle. Then followed the clash of arms, the desperate cry of the Free Lances, "Ludwig for Enhoven, ho!" and the general din of battle.

Ludwig started in astonishment, while Anna sunk fainting to the floor.

"We are surprised!" cried the "Wolf."

A Free Lance, with Ludwig's battle-ax and helmet, rushed into the apartment.

"Captain!" he cried, breathless with haste, "the foe have gained the court-yard by the secret postern. Stuifnel has been killed by their leader, and our men are taken at disadvantage!"

"Who leads them?" cried Ludwig, fastening on his helmet.

"Louis of Hanault. I know him by his helmet and his golden mail!"

Ludwig ran down the stairs in hot haste and dashed, battle-ax in hand, into the fray, shouting his war-cry:

"Strike for the 'Wolf'!"

The desperate onset of the "Wolf" as he fought his way through opposing ranks, bringing down a man-at-arms at every blow of his good ax, encouraged his followers, who had been giving way before the press of Flemish steel; and, with new hopes, they fought the desperate fight.

The lances of the leagued nobles outnumbered, however, nearly two to one the soldiers of Ludwig, and also had on their side the advantage of the surprise. So, slowly but surely, they gained ground.

Ludwig saw this, and fought with the fury of a tiger. The men of Gueldres, struck down around him in a circle, by the blows of his heavy ax, gave way in terror before the "Wolf" until, at last, he found himself face to face with the leader of the attacking force, Louis of Hanault, clad from head to foot in golden mail.

Now commenced a desperate encounter, as Ludwig and Hanault crossed axes. Hanault, however, had the advantage in size, and was fully as skilled in the use of the weapon as the "Wolf."

Fast clashed the axes together as blow upon blow. At last the force of one of Ludwig's strokes carried his ax beyond the guard, and the steel edge of Hanault's weapon came down full on the side of Ludwig's helmet, burst it from its fastenings, and the steel morion fell to the ground, leaving the head of the "Wolf" uncovered.

Ludwig made a desperate stroke to retrieve the error; again his guard was false, and the keen edge of Hanault's ax sunk deep into the unprotected head of Ludwig. Down he went, stone dead, to the ground, his long yellow hair crimsoned here and there with his life's blood.

The chase was up; the hunt was done; the "Wolf" had fallen, and Enhoven's tower was won!

The Free Lances fled in dismay at the death of their leader, and, as the great gate had been opened, nearly all the un wounded ones had escaped; let us hope, to lead better lives.

The allied knights are gathered in the banqueting hall, where Count Arnold, who had accompanied the expedition in his litter, gladly held his daughter in his arms. By his side stood the victor in the golden mail. He removed his helmet and displayed the brown locks of Liderick du Bucq, for it was he who had won the fight and killed the "Wolf." Hanault was close at hand, in plain black armor.

The plan of Arnold succeeded well, and all declared Liderick the bravest lance in Germany.

The blow from the ax which Liderick received in the garden, glanced from the helmet, and for a few moments only stunned the soldier. The instant he recovered, he led the lances to Enhoven, only stopping to don the golden armor of Hanault. Stuifnel's scouts being delayed, the hour gave time for Liderick to completely encircle the castle with his forces, and scarcely had the scouts passed beyond the castle gates, when they fell into his hands, and one of them, in exchange for his life, revealed the secret plan.

Liderick returned to Gueldres in triumph, and ere six months were over, became the husband of Anna, the Pearl.

The castle of Enhoven was demolished by Count Arnold's orders.

The body of Ludwig was buried in the court-yard where he fell. And naught now, but an unsightly pile of ruins, with the long wild grass and noxious weeds, the outcasts of their class, growing thick about them, mark the resting-place of the last of his race, Ludwig, the Wolf of Enhoven.

THE END.

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"Very mischievous," he replied, with that same aggravating earnestness.

Nothing further was said until they reached the house.

She made an excuse to leave him for a few moments and hurried up-stairs to her chamber. Once there, she set about rearranging her toilet, which had suffered considerably from contact with the damp soil in the garden.

Bathing her face in cold water had the effect of removing all traces of tears, and the crimson flush that had burned in either cheek, while, without the aid of Rebecca, she managed to replace her soiled Swiss with a light gauzy fabric, in which she appeared, if possible, more charming than ever.

She left her chamber by a side-door, stole along a corridor which led to a flight of stairs in the rear of the house, and then she found herself in the garden again.

The music came to her in fitful waves of melody; the night wind fanned her brow, and feigning a gladsome smile, she tripped up the few broad stone steps and fluttered in among the guests again.

"Why, Laura, dear!" said Mrs. Placide, "we're becoming actually dull without you."

"Yes," chimed in Miss Nannie Parry, "we would be lost without the music of your merry laugh."

Laura bowed, smiled, shook her head, as she replied:

"Pardon me if I have neglected my duty as hostess. I'm sure I could not be missed much where Miss Parry is; and, really, it is so long since I have attempted the role of entertainer that I've lost all grace for the part."

"Possibly you are like some other young ladies of the set," returned Mrs. Placide, with a bland smile and a significant glance over her fan; "you would rather be entertained than entertain. Ten to one there was some person else in the garden. There now! don't blush. That looks bad, almost a confession—eh, ladies?"

They all laughed a merry peal at Laura's embarrassment and Mrs. Placide's thrust, but Laura, remembering who had been in the garden, and what had been said there, felt her heart fail, and she felt greatly relieved when Mrs. Placide proposed music, and Miss Parry began to sing.

It was an artistic performance, but the voice lacked certain elements, in the absence of which, vocalism can not charm the sensitive or educated ear.

Laura next took the stool. She rattled over a portion of "The Storm," from "William Tell," then dropped into a sweet, soothing English air, which drew a crowd about the piano, and calmed a half dozen talking groups.

Miss Parry's performance had been unquestionably more artistic, but Laura's more sympathetic, and, withal, more pleasing.

Dr. Foster congratulated her on her success, and Mrs. Placide whispered into Mrs. Parry's ear:

"A sweet voice, but affected—very affected."

"Yes, very affected," replied Mrs. Parry, whose jealousy had been somewhat aroused by Dr. Foster's compliments and attentions to the heiress of Robarts Place.

It was midnight when the party separated, and the last to leave was Dr. Foster.

"You must call on us often," said Laura, as he bid her "good-night."

"I shall be very happy to do so," was the reply. "When will I find Mrs. Robarts at leisure?"

"Whenever it pleases Dr. Foster to call."

He pressed her hand, and leaping into the carriage, rolled away.

(To be continued—commenced in No. 85.)

KEEP TO THE RIGHT AS THE LAW DIRECTS.

A good law, too—a law which, if all were to follow, would be the pleasantest path, but we are not content to keep to the right; we want to diverge a little, and crowd on our neighbors, although we don't like our toes trodden on. How many there are who think it no sin to cheat their neighbors, yet seem to imagine it to be a most heinous crime for others to cheat them. They love to crowd, yet dislike being crowded. Now all this could be avoided if all were to obey the command given at the head of this article. Why not do it? 'Tis simple enough.

The Abominations of Society has been the general subject of a series of Rev. T. De Witt Talmage's vigorous and effective sermons at the spacious Brooklyn Tabernacle, and these, with others, will be published February 1st, under the above title, in a 16mo, fine, large type, by Adams, Victor & Co., 98 William street. A sermon on the social evil, "The House of the Blackness of Darkness," is an outspoken and terrible denunciation calculated to a wide horror of its insidious poisonings. Other views of the times, stock-gambling, leprosy newspapers, white and black lies, intemperance, "the massacre by needle and sewing-machine," etc., receive telling and resounding blows, but there are quieter words about "the good time coming" as well. The writer says in his preface: "The book is not for young men only; the Calabria was wrecked the last day out." Nor is the book more for the men than women. The best thing that God ever made is a good woman, and the worst that the devil ever made is a bad one. The book is sure to sell widely. —Price \$1.50.

We add: the volume is an outspoken and perfectly fearless expose, well calculated to alarm our young men and young women especially, who are so vitally affected by these social sins and popular vices. It is in no sense a volume of sermons, for such of the subjects as the author has canvassed in the pulpit he has wholly rewritten and elaborated for this volume; while as to the great bulk of the matter this is its first utterance.

And a powerful utterance it is. Such splendor and force of expression—such vivid characterization and subtle exposition of what is insidious and covert—such pathos, tenderness, sweetness—we never have met with, in a volume of its compass. It will have an immense currency, and de a vast deal of good, we have no doubt.

THE NEIGHBOR I DISLIKE.

She comes to me, and tells me all the affairs of the neighborhood. She relates to me a story about somebody whom she strongly suspects of being dishonest, and who never pays his debts. And yet, she forgets how many pounds of tea, and sugar, and flour, she has borrowed of me, but has never remembered to return!

She remains how mean and stingy certain persons are, and wishes the minister would give them a hint about meanness being almost akin to sin. When I go to take tea with her, I always come home hungry, and if I help myself to more than one spoonful

of sugar, she looks at me, as though she be grudged me the same.

She wonders why persons can not keep their houses in a cleanly manner, but doesn't seem to consider it any thing out of the way to bring her dripping umbrella into my best room, or make tracks over my freshly-swept floor. If I remark on its impetuosity, she hints that "some people are rather over particular."

She does not think that Mr. So-and-such will enter Heaven because he don't read the Scriptures every day; yet she will go to meeting all Sunday, and she can't remember the text, or one word of the sermon, but will give an accurate description of what every one wore there. Is she more sure of a chance in Heaven than Mr. So-and-so?

She tells me that she doesn't see how Mrs. Quiggs can get along as she does, for she considers her about as shiftless a piece of humanity as ever was invented. While my neighbor is commenting on these things, her kettle at home may be boiling over, and her husband may have come home, hungry and tired. These things in her are of course quite excusable, but a most grievous wrong

My neighbor has a horror of novels and fictitious stories, never allowing one to enter her house, believing any one who reads them will come to a bad end; yet I have known her to read with great gusto the sickening details of a criminal's execution, or the testimony in a divorce case.

She refuses to speak to a young man because he was heard once to swear, but thinks all deacons of her church perfect. I have known that young man to share his last dollar with one poorer than himself, and I have known one of those deacons to pass a tired traveler in the road, while he was riding in his wagon, and never asked the traveler to "hop in."

She is pleased to inform me that she considers the theater a most wicked place, although she never visited one in her life; and that actors and actresses are the most depraved of characters, when she never saw one.

She was an admirer of Dickens' writings, until some persons, who professed to teach the examples of our Maker, slandered his memory, and then every work of his she immediately put into the fire!

She opens my boxes, and rummages through my bureau drawers, believing I have no objections, as she is a personal friend of mine. If I go to her house, she'll eye me as though I wanted to be guilty of the same mean action, which I assuredly would score to do.

She always complains that she never gets time to attend to her work, when she scarcely ever is home to do it. She not only loses time herself, but makes me do the same thing.

In fact, her presence to me is far from being agreeable, but I am not rude enough to tell her so.

EYE LAWLESS.

SHORT LECTURES ON DRESS.

BY THE "FAT CONTRIBUTOR."

CANES.

It is customary to speak of wearing a cane—and I have known them worn all up on people before now—that appendage of ornament, or use, comes very properly under the head of dress, and I shall accordingly devote a lecture to it.

The earliest Cain of which there is any record was raised by Adam, though carried by mother Eve for some little time. Abel was the first man who was made the subject of a Cain presentation. He was taken, wholly by surprise, as men are to this day, and couldn't find words in which to express himself.

Canes were first carried as a defense against the canine race, hence their name. They were of rude construction, but tough material, and were worn with the bark on. Dogs were not afraid of their bark, although entertaining a healthy dread of their bite. I would like to canine or ten dogs that infest my neighborhood.

Canes may be classified as ornamental and useful, although frequently combining the two qualities. The men who grown prematurely old, lean the heaviest on stout hickories, in their swell days sported the stoutest of bamboos, when they went forth to bamboo.

Shakspeare divides the life of man into seven ages. There are ages of canes as well. Close imitators of men as boys are, they take to canes very early. At first, it is a sugar-cane; then they perform astonishing equestrian feats astride grandfather's walking-stick, and about the time they get into their first boots they stroll around, swinging miniature canes in imitation of their grown-up brothers. In addition to this, during their schoolboy days, they are sometimes made painfully familiar with the master's cane.

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SATURDAY JOURNAL.

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BLOWING BUBBLES.

BY MALCOLM TAYLOR, JR.

A-waay with playing
Out in the cold street,
The frolicsome Freddie,
Who knows not a seat,
Makes manmakin' get somethin'
To do when he's killed,
A clay pipe and tumbler,
With soap-water filled.

So soon in his glory,
With breath soft and slow
Are Freddie's cheeks swellin',
Bright bubbles to blow;
Up to the swelling,
A trumpet and ball,
Each rises so airy,
Or faintly does fall.

So round and so radiant,
Each rich rainbow hue,
Their surface reflecting
Red, green, orange, blue;
But just for a moment
The bubbles do stay,
Till at the touch bursting,
They vanish away.

Ah! many men thoughtful
Their bubbles do blow,
Fair lines of the promised arch
Brightly to show;
Bubbles fullest floating,
A touch does each break,
And leaves him with nothing,
Or new ones to make.

Tracked to Death: THE LAST SHOT.

BY CAPT. MAYNE REID,
AUTHOR OF "HELPLESS HAND," "LOVE RANCH,"
"SCALP HUNTERS," "WHITE CHIEF," ETC.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SMOOTH-BORE BULLET.

CHARLES CLANCY missing had been the mystery of the morning. This, while there were hopes of his being alive. Now that these hopes were no more—that all believed him to be dead—most of them feeling quite certain of it—as great, if not greater, mystery was, that his body was missing. Indeed, no one doubted his death, nor that it had been brought about by violence—that he had been killed. The sign was sufficient evidence. The blood upon the ground—there was a pool of it, or had been before it became congealed—seemed enough to have emptied the veins of any ordinary man. It was scarcely possible that a body so depleted could still be alive. Besides, no living man would have so left his hat and gun behind.

And yet, if dead, what had become of the corpse? An equal mystery. If carried away, why had these things been left? Who could have carried it away? Wherefore, and whither? And for what reason surreptitiously? An accumulation of mysteries!

Puzzled, confused, almost awed by them, the searchers at length left the ground. Not, however, until after giving it that sort of investigation that satisfies the instincts of a crowd. They had spent most part of a day in this, without thinking of aught else, not even of their dinners. But night was approaching; they had grown hungry; and one after another hurried toward their homes; at first in odd individuals, then in straggling groups, the movement at length extending to the main body of those who composed the searchers. They went home, determined to return on the following day, and, if necessary, renew the search.

Only two men stayed—Simeon Woodley and a companion, a young backwoodsman—like himself, a professional hunter.

"I'm darned glad they're gone off," said Woodley, as soon as the two were left alone.

"Dan Boone himself couldn't take up a track w' such a noisy clanjamfery 'round him."

"I've tak notice o' somethin', Ned, the which I didn't weesh to make known while they was about—"specially while Dick Darke war on the ground." Let's go now, and see if there's any thing to be made out o' it."

The young hunter, whose name was Heywood—Edward Heywood—simply made sign of assent, and followed his elder companion.

After walking about two hundred yards through the forest, Woodley made a stop beside a cypress "knee" with his face toward it, and his eyes fixed upon a spot nearly on a level with his chin. It was one of the largest of these singular vegetable excrements that perplex the botanist.

"You see that, Ned?" said the old hunter, at the same time extending his finger to point out something near the summit of the "knee."

The last Heywood did not need. His eyes were already on the object.

"I see a bullet-hole, sure; and something red 'round the edge of it. Looks like blood?"

"It air blood, an' nothin' else. It's a bullet-hole, too; and the bit o' lead lodged in there has just passed through some critter's flesh. Else why shed that's been blood upon it? Let's dig it out, and see what we kin make o' it."

Woodley took a knife from his pocket, and, springing open the blade, inserted it into the bark of the cypress, close to the bullet-hole. He did this dexterously and with caution, taking care not to touch the encrusted orifice the ball had made, or in any way alter its appearance. Making a circular incision around, and gradually deepening, he at length extracted the piece of lead from the tree with the wood in which it was imbedded. He knew there was a gun-bullet inside. The point of his knife-blade told him so. He had probed the hole before commencing to cut it out.

Weighing the piece of wood in his hand, and then passing it into that of his companion, he said:

"Ned, this here chunk o' timmer's got a bullet inside o' it that niver kim out o' any rifle. That's the ball o' an ounce weight of it. Only a smooth-bore ked 'a' discharged such a lot o' lead."

"You're right there," answered Heywood, in like manner testing the ponderosity of the piece. "It's the ball of a smooth-bore, no doubt of it."

"Well, then, who carries a smooth-bore through these woods? Who, Ned Heywood?"

"I know only one man who does it."

"Name him! Name the durn rascal!"

"Dick Darke."

"Ye may drink afore me, Ned. That's the skunk I war a-thinkin' 'bout, an' he've been all the day. I seed o'er sign beside this, the which escaped the eyes o' the rest. An' I'm glad it did, for I didn't want Dick Darke to be about when I war follerin' it up. For that reezum I drawed the people aside; so as none o' 'em shed notice it. By good luck they didn't."

"What other sign have you seen?"

"Tracks in the mud close in by the edge o' the swamp. They're a good bit from the place whar the poor young fellur hez gone down, an' makin' away from it. I jest got a glimpse at them, an' keed see they'd been made by a man runnin'. I'll bet my head on't they war made by a pair o' boots I've seen Dick Darke wearin'. It's too gloomy now to make anythin' out o' them. So le's you an' me go by ourselves in the mornin' at the earliest o' daybreak, afore the people get about. Then we kin give them tracks a thorror scrutinizatin'. If they don't prove to be Dick Darke's, then call Simeon Woodley a thick-headed woodchuck."

"How shall we know them? If we only had his boots, so that we might compare them?"

"I'll! That's no if. We shall hev his boots—boun' to hev 'em."

"But how are we to get them?"

"Leave that to me. I've thot o' a plan to git pursesoon o' the skunk's futwear an' everythin' else belon'g to him that kin throw light on this dark bizness. Come, Ned, le's go now to the widder's house an' see if we kin say a word o' comfort to the poor lady, for a lady she air. Belike enough this thing'll be her death-blow. She warn't strong at best, an' she's been a deal weaker since the husban' died. Now the son's good too. Come on, Heywood. Let's show her she ain't forsook by ever'body."

"I'm with you, Woodley!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.

To the mother of Charles Clancy it was a day of terrible suspense while they were abroad searching for her son. Far more fearful the night after they had returned—not without tidings of the missing man. Such tidings! The too certain assurance of his death—of his having been assassinated, with no traces of the assassin—no clue to the whereabouts of his body.

The mother's grief, hitherto kept in check by a still lingering hope, now escaped all bounds, and became truly agonizing. Her heart seemed broken; if not, surely was it breaking. Although, in her poverty, without many friends, she was not left alone in her sorrow. It could not be so in the far South-west. Several of her neighbors—rough backwoodsman though they were—had kind hearts under their coarse homespun, determined to stay with her all night.

They remained outside in the porch, smoking their pipes, and discussing the events of the day, and the mystery of the murder.

At first they talked cautiously, two and two, and only in whispers. These gradually became mutterings pronounced in louder tone; while the name of Richard Darke could be heard frequently. He, of course, was not among the men remaining in the widow Clancy's cottage.

Soon the conversation grew general, those who took it in expressing themselves more openly; until, at length, Dick Darke—as, for short, his neighbors called him—became the sole topic of their discourse.

His behavior during the day had not escaped their notice. Even the most stolid among them had observed a strangeness in it. By his counterfeited zeal he had overdone himself. The sharpest of the searchers only saw this; but all were more or less struck with something besides surprise—suspicion, in short—when they saw the dog turn upon, and bark at him. What could that mean?

Just as one had put this interrogatory, and answers or surmises were being offered, the same dog—the hound—was again heard giving tongue. The animal had sprung out from the porch and commenced barking, as if some person was making approach to the house. Almost simultaneously the little wicket-gate in front was heard turning on its hinges.

A hired negro boy, who was attached to the establishment, quieted the dog; and then spoke to the party who had lifted the gate latch. Only a few muttered words were exchanged. Then the boy returned to the house; two men following close upon his heels. They were Simeon Woodley and Ned Heywood.

The others, recognizing, rose to receive them, and the two hunters became part of the conclave which was still discussing the events of the day.

Woodley—looked up to by all as the man most likely to throw light on the series of mysteries perplexing them—soon became the chief speaker; the rest hearkening to him as if he were an oracle.

There was no loud talking done. On the contrary, the discussion was carried on in a low tone—at times almost in whispers—the little group permitted to take part in it, keeping their heads close together, so that the women and domestics should not hear what was said.

They who thus deliberated were in darkness. At least there was no light in the porch where they sat, except what came from the occasional flash of a candle carried across the corridor from room to room. When this flashed over their faces, it showed there, upon one and all of them, an expression different from that likely to be called forth by an ordinary conversation. Eyes could be seen sparkling with a passion, as of anger, ill held in restraint; lips tightly pressed upon teeth that seemed set determinedly on some purpose wanting only an additional word to give it the cue for action.

The same candle's gleam revealed the form of Simeon Woodley in the center of the group, holding in his hand an object that, without being told what it was, no one could have guessed. They to whom he was exhibiting it knew well. It was a piece of cypress wood, inside which was the bullet of a gun. They had received full explanations as to how the ball had been found thus buried, and saw the blood-tinge around the orifice it had made on entering? In short, they had been made aware of every thing already known to the two hunters.

Darke hoped he was dead. The night before he felt sure of it; not so now. As he lay sleepless on his couch, struggling with disturbed thoughts—with fears that appalled him—he would have given the best run-away nigger he had ever caught to be assured that Clancy was dead. And he would have granted half a score of his father's slaves their full freedom—cheerfully given it—if that could have guaranteed him against detection or punishment. He was being punished, if not through remorse of conscience, by craven fear. He knew now how hard it is to sleep the sleep of the assassin, or lie wakeful upon a murderer's bed.

His midnight agony was easy, compared with that he was called upon to endure when the morning light came through the window of his chamber, and along with it voices. They were many and strange, all

scarce slept at all. Two causes kept him awake—the weight of guilt upon his soul, and the sting of scornful words yet ringing in his ear—these last uttered by the woman he so wildly loved.

Either should have been sufficient to torture him, and did—the last more than the first. He had little remorse for having killed the man, but great chagrin at having been slighted by the woman. The slight had contributed to the crime, making the latter less repented of. Had it served its purpose there would have been no thought of repentance. But it had not. He had done a murder, and made nothing out of it. For this reason only did he regret what he had done.

In his half-waking, half-dreaming slumbers, he fancied he could hear the howling of a hound. It awoke him; but when awake he thought no more of it, or only with a transient apprehension. His thoughts were of Helen Armstrong—of her scorn, and his discomfiture. This was a sure thing now; and he could no longer hope. Next morning she would be gone from him forever. A steamboat, leaving Natchez at the earliest hour of day, would convey Colonel Armstrong, with all his belongings, far away from the place. It would know them no more; and he, Richard Darke, in all probability, would never again set eyes on the woman he loved—so madly as to have committed murder for her sake.

"Why the devil did I do it?"

In this coarse shape did he express himself, as he lay upon his couch, lightly thinking of the foul deed, but weightily grieving how little it had availed him.

Such were his reflections on the first night after it. Far different were they on the second. Then Helen Armstrong was no more in his thoughts, or only having a secondary place in them. Then the howls of the hound were heard, or fancied, more frequently. They did not startle him from his sleep, for he slept not at all. All night long he lay thinking of his crime, or rather of the peril in which it had placed him.

The events of the day had given him a clearer comprehension of things; and he now knew he was in danger. No one had said any thing, to tell him that suspicion was directed upon him. Still there was the circumstance which might be known, that he and Clancy had both been aspirants to the hand of Helen Armstrong. He did not think it was known. He hoped not, as their rivalry would point to a probable motive for the murder. For all this he feared it.

He reviewed his own conduct throughout the day. During the search and in the presence of the searchers, he had borne himself satisfactorily. He had taken an active part, counterfeiting surprise, zeal, and sorrow to the full that felt by any of the party—indeed, greater. It was the worst thing he could have done, since it had attracted suspicion. Though he had not noticed it, eyes were upon him, keenly bent, watching his every movement, and ears listening to every speech he uttered. There had been no change in his countenance that was not noted; and comments made upon it—behind his back. As he had not heard them, he then felt secure—though far from confidently so. He was only confident of there being no evidence, except what might be called circumstantial; and this only slight. For all, he had at times during the day come very near convulsive trembling. Not from any remorse of conscience, but a cold shiver that crept over him as he approached the spot where the deed had been done. And when he at length stood upon it, under the somber shadow of the cypress—among the moss with which he had shrouded the corpse—when he saw that it was no longer there—his fear was intensified. It became awe—dread, mysterious awe. Sure of having there left a dead body—the only one sure of this—what had become of it? Had the dead come to life again? Had Charles Clancy, shot through the breast—he had noted the place by the blood gushing from it as he held the picture before his victim's face—could Clancy have again risen to his feet? Could a man, having his body bored by a three-quarter-ounce ball, and laid prostrate along the earth, ever get up again? Was it possible for him to survive?

As the murderer put these questions to himself, on the spot where the murder had been committed, no wonder he felt awed, as well as mystified—no wonder his features showed a strange expression—one so peculiar as to have attracted attention. They who noticed it, however, had said nothing—at least, in his presence.

The dog had not been so reticent. As we have said, the dumb brute seemed also to take note of his weird, wild look, and had only barked at him.

Darke had preserved sufficient presence of mind to explain this to the searching party, telling them he had once corrected the hound out hunting with his friend Clancy, and that ever since the animal had shown anger with him.

The tale was plausible. For all that, it did not deceive those to whom he told it. Some of them drew deductions from it still more unfavorable to the teller.

But if the mystery of the missing body had troubled him during the day—in the hour when his blood was up, and his nerves strung with excitement—in the night—in the chill silent hours, as he lay tossing upon his couch—it more than troubled, more than awed—it horrified him. In vain he tried to compose himself by shaping out some explanation of the mystery. He could not comprehend it; he could not even form a probable conjecture. Was Clancy dead, or still living? Had he walked away from the ground? Or been carried from it, a corpse?

In either case the danger to him, Darke, would be almost equal. Better, indeed, if Clancy were dead; for then there would be but the circumstantial evidence against his assassin. If alive, he could himself give testimony of the attempt, which, criminally, would be almost the same.

Darke hoped he was dead. The night before he felt sure of it; not so now. As he lay sleepless on his couch, struggling with disturbed thoughts—with fears that appalled him—he would have given the best run-away nigger he had ever caught to be assured that Clancy was dead. And he would have granted half a score of his father's slaves their full freedom—cheerfully given it—if that could have guaranteed him against detection or punishment.

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His midnight agony was easy, compared with that he was called upon to endure when the morning light came through the window of his chamber, and along with it voices. They were many and strange, all

speaking in tones of vengeance. The assassin sprung from his couch, and, rushing across the room, looked through the open easement. It did not need this to tell him what the fracas was about. His guilty heart had already guessed it. Among the half-score horsemen, who had drawn up around the house, he recognized the sheriff of the county, and beside him two others, he knew to be constables.

These three had already dismounted, and were entering the door.

In ten seconds after they were inside his sleeping-chamber; the sheriff, as he stepped across its threshold, saying, in firm, clear voice:

"Richard Darke, I arrest you!"

"For what?"

"For the murder of Charles Clancy."

"Richard Darke, I arrest you!"

"To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

for she fully believed him lost, basely assassinated—this accumulated anguish was too much for her woman's strength, of late fast failing; and when the neighbors got back, clustering around her dwelling, they could hear sounds within, that told of some disaster.

On the night before they had heard the same; but now the tone was different. Then the widow's voice was lifted in lamentation; now it was not heard at all.

Whatever of mystery there might be, it soon received elucidation.

A woman, coming out upon the porch, and raising her hand in token of silence, said, in sad, solemn voice:

"Mrs. Clancy is dead!"

"Richard Darke, I arrest you!"

"To be continued—Commenced in No. 97.)

The Red Rajah:

THE SCOURGE OF THE INDIES.

A TALE OF THE MALAYA ISLES.

know. We sailed about, sometimes with the fleet, sometimes with the Bonita, till last night, when we heard heavy cannonading. Then they took down our sails, and we rowed all night, till they landed us here in the morning, and here you have found us."

"But when were these two gentlemen mutilated in that manner?" asked Claude, pointing to poor Skinner's head.

"The Rajah came on board one day, and ordered my father and me below, and we heard cries on deck. When we came up, we found these gentlemen had been treated as you see. They told us that they had been compelled to write letters to their partners, on the subject of their ransoms. The Rajah threatened to cut them to pieces if they did not do it."

"We were allowed to see Marguerite last night, that is to say, I was. I forgot to tell you that my maid, Surya, was with me till then, attending and dressing me, as she used to. But yesterday night she was taken from me, and sent to attend Marguerite. I found the poor child very glad to see me, and she told me that the Rajah had consented to set me free. At first, you know, he was going to establish a harem, the wretch, of which I was to be an ornament. But she had persuaded him to yield to her, and, in requital, she had promised to marry him."

Claude had a hard struggle to control himself here.

"While we were talking," continued Julia, "an old lady came into the cabin, who was introduced as Madame de Choiseul, Marguerite's aunt. She was very deaf, and asked me at once, 'Was not Monsieur le Comte a man magnificent, a man glorious?' When I answered that I did not know him, she did not hear me, but went on praising this generous count, who was to make her old age happy and marry her niece, Marguerite, and how they were to live somewhere, I could not catch where, for at that moment the chief devil came in—the Rajah I mean. He looked like a devil for a moment, I tell you, when he saw the old lady and heard her prattle. But the next minute he was as cool and courteous as ever, and advanced to me, saying that it was time to depart. Marguerite cried, but the old lady did not seem to understand. He explained to her that I had come from another vessel, which was going back, and so I came away."

"He must have deceived Marguerite, for she evidently thought I was set free on her account. But I was not, for papa tells me that it has cost us an immense sum of money."

"How did this Rajah take leave of you?" asked Captain Pendleton at this juncture.

"With perfect politeness. He asked if the old lady had told me any thing of his future plans, but I assured him she had not, and he seemed to be satisfied. Just before he left me, which was on this island, in front of this tent, he said to me: 'You may thank the power of innocence in that child, Miss Earle, that has preserved you from harm. If it had not been for her, you would have stayed in the fleet, after your father's ransom was paid. You were not included in it. Henceforth you will hear no more of the Red Rajah. He leaves these seas forever.'"

"What does that mean, I wonder?" said Claude.

"I suppose the blackguard has determined to retire to the shades of private life," returned Pendleton. "And, indeed, if he can keep all the money he has made to himself, he will have a very respectable fortune. Well, we must be after him. The screw will be in order by to-morrow morning."

During the night the crew of the Comanche were hard at work, clearing the screw of the thick folds of canvas in which it appeared to be inextricably entangled, and finally got it clear.

Then the Earles and their companions were put on board one of the captured prahus, to be sent to their homes at Singapore. Peyton took command of the best sailor of the lot, and bid farewell to Pendleton.

He was resolved to hunt out the Rajah, in the midst of the reefs among which the Bonita was doubtless threading her way; and with that object stood off to the east, leaving the Spice Islands in his wake.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEWS FROM HOME.

A YEAR after the events we have described in our story, Claude Peyton found himself in Calcutta, as far from the object of his search as ever. He had cruised among all the islands of Malaysia, and far out into the Pacific Ocean, but no sign of the terrible Red Rajah had he seen, since the day when he disappeared from view, with Marguerite by his side.

Where was she now, beautiful, innocent Marguerite? Had the Rajah kept his promise and married her? and where had they gone to? They had vanished from the Eastern world as completely as if they had never been.

Heart-sick and disappointed, with a weary pain at his heart that had never left him, the young Virginian sailed back to Calcutta. He passed through the heart of the Sootoo Sea, where the pirates had once held their court, and found it covered with peaceful traders. With the exit of the Red Rajah, peace returned to the seas, except near the coasts of Borneo and Celebes, where sneaking rowboat pirates still kept their haunts, to snap up unwary fishing-boats.

Claude did not stop at Singapore. He had not the heart. He was too gloomy about Marguerite's loss. He passed through the Straits of Malacca with a fair wind, and arrived at Calcutta.

Lying in the Hoogly was a frigate, recognized at once as the Oomance. Peyton ran alongside in his weather-beaten prahu, and was soon on board, and shaking hands with his old friend Pendleton.

The two had much to talk about, Claude to narrate his fruitless expedition, Pendleton to make a confession.

"Claude, old fellow," said the captain, with something very like a blush, "I'm going to leave the service. I've sent in my resignation, and as soon as it's accepted I leave here."

"Why, where on earth are you going, Horace?" asked Peyton, surprised.

"To Singapore," said the other. "The fact is, Claude—I'm going to be married to Miss Earle—you remember her?"

"To be sure I do."

"Yes, and we're going to live in Virginia. To be sure the father is somewhat objectionable, with his absent aspistles, but we shall not see him, and the lady herself is perfection, as you know."

"I congratulate you, Horace," said Claude, cordially. "As for me, I don't know what I shall do. I've found no trace of that vil-

lain, the Rajah, and poor little Marguerite is gone forever, I fear."

"Why don't you go back to the old plantation?" asked Pendleton. "It's over four years now since you have seen the old folks; and my father writes me word that they often talk about you there. By the by, there are some letters for you, lying in the post-office here. The clerk told me that they had been there for over a month. One of them was directed in your father's handwriting."

"Indeed!" said Claude, eagerly. "Then I must go and get them at once. Good-by, Horace."

"Din' with me this evening—won't you—at six," called out the captain, as the other left the cabin.

"All right. With pleasure, I mean," and Peyton buttoned down the side-ladder as if he had been shot.

He was very anxious to hear from home. Pendleton's account stirred up all the tender memories of his boyhood. He thought of his father and mother, now growing old; of his lost brother, Clarence, whom he had not seen for so many years. Had Clarence come home, perhaps? He rushed to the post-office, and found several letters. Two he knew at sight to be bankers' advices, with remittances from home. The third was in his father's well-known hand, and he tore it open with impatience.

It was short, and referred to a previous letter, which the writer presumed he had received at Singapore. The last words electrified him:

"As I told you in my last letter that your brother Clarence had returned home, and that we were reconciled, you will not be surprised to hear that his marriage is to take place at Christmas. During his travels he has accumulated great wealth, and his bride is worthy of him. Come home quickly, Claude. We all long to see you, and none more than—

"Your affectionate father."

GEORGE H. PEYTON."

Claude was astounded.

His brother come home, and this the first knew of it! How he wished he had stopped at Singapore! Then he would have understood it fully.

As it was, he had no time to lose. The steamer for Europe was going the next day, and he had only time to cash his remittances and take his passage, during the short business hours of Calcutta.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE END.

THE evening was deliciously mild and fine. The winter had been remarkably open and dry so far, and the roads were very tolerable still. No snow had fallen yet, to convert them into those terrible quagmires that have given Virginia a world-wide reputation. The fields were brown and bare, it is true; the forests leafless; but the warm suns lay upon the wood-sides, and the quail piped among the stubble.

Flocks of wild ducks, high overhead, were winging their steady way southward through the blue sky, to find their rest in the distant marshes of South Carolina.

Every now and then, the distant report of a fowling-piece showed where some sportsman was at work, filling his game-bag.

Claude Peyton rode along the well-remembered road, by field and forest, his heart full of pleasant thoughts, mingled with a gentle sadness.

He was coming home. Home, with its sweet influences, was drawing nearer every moment. He should see his mother once more, and his dear old father, and that brother whom he only remembered as a boy.

Where had Clarence been all this time? and what was this mystery about him? The letter explained nothing. And what would he not have given could he but have known where Marguerite was! But she was gone from him forever. He should never see that graceful little figure again. She was lost to him, and in the clutches of a pirate, hidden away in some distant place in the Earth.

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As he rode along, every thing seemed to recall his boyhood. There was the wood where he and Clarence used to hunt rabbits, long ago. That tall blasted tree on the hill-top was the same one whence he and Clarence had taken the young hawks from their nest. How bold and handsome Clarence was! What a high temper he had! Claude remembered, as if it were yesterday, the quarrel between Clarence and his father, twenty-two years ago, now; and how the boy had ridden away from the house in a passion, declaring he never would come back.

Old Colonel Peyton had not believed the threat, but Clarence had fulfilled it. He had been tracked as far as Baltimore, when his father grew anxious at last, and hunted for him. But the clue was lost there. Whether he had gone to sea or not, no one knew; but they surmised as much; for a slaver had escaped from the port a week before, and it was rumored that a boy, answering Clarence's description, had gone in her.

Claude took command with his characteristic quickness.

"It is, I father," he said; "I saw him fall. Don't talk yet." We must get him out. Here, boys, one of you get on the horse's head. Quick. So. Now four of you take him by the legs. Hold on as tight as you can. He can't kick now. So. Now haul the brute off the body. Two of you take him by the arms, and drag him out. Quick. All together. So."

Then he was surrounded by the wondering negroes, and recognized his father at their head.

Colonel Peyton was so shocked and astounded as to be incapable of superintending the removal of the body.

"Claude! Clarence! My God! What a welcome to my boy!" was all he could ejaculate.

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"Do not think of it—such things happen every day. It is only the way of the world."

There was an untold depth of bitterness and sorrow in her tone. He did not dare to look at her, but leaned his head on his hand with a groan.

"You have acted as most would have done; and as wisdom is only bought by experience, I will be wiser for the future. Do not blame yourself too severely, my lord; it all does not rest on you. Others—the dead and the living have alike erred, yet I suppose they thought they were acting for the best. Let us be thankful it is no worse—we have both cause!"

"Oh, Norma!"

"You have got a fortune and a title, and do not need to make a *marriage de convenance*; and I have discovered it all in time; so things are not so bad, my lord, as they might be."

"Oh, Norma! What a villain I must seem in your eyes!"

"A villain! Oh, not at all; it is a common thing enough, and habit redeems every thing. Perhaps we both live to be thankful things have ended as they have."

"But your father, Norma?"

"My father loves me well enough to sacrifice even his long-cherished plan at my wish. I have only to say I do not wish this engagement to be fulfilled, and he will leave me as free as air."

"Norma, did you ever love me?" he asked—his man's vanity, as she rightly judged, wounded by her apparent coldness; for when men, the generous creatures! renounce the woman who has once told them she loved them, they like to think of her as pining away, and dying of a broken heart, and all that sort of thing, for their sake; and Lord Alfred Earnecliffe, though an English peer, was just made of the same clay as his more plebeian brethren.

"My lord," she said, with a dark, bright flash of her eye that reminded him of Jacquette, "you have no right to ask that question!"

"Perhaps not, but I fancy there has been little love lost on your side, and that you are very glad to be rid of me!"

"Ah," she said, with a half-smile, "did I not say your masculine vanity would be wounded? Confess, now, it would be balm of Gilead for you to see me shedding floods of tears, and bemoaning like a tragic heroine."

"No, I hope I am not quite so selfish. Since we must part, I am glad you mind it so little—yes, I am!" he said, trying hard to convince himself he spoke the truth.

"Thank you! And now, my lord, let me ask you a question—do you intend remaining for the present in England?"

"Yes. I rather think so. I am tired of rambling."

"That is well. I want to go abroad and travel for a year or two on the Continent; and if you were going, I should remain where I am. So, when Mrs. Tremain and Emily leave next month, I shall go with them."

"But you are sure your father will make no objections to this overthrow of all his plans?"

"No; on the contrary, I am quite sure he will object, but I think I can persuade him to let me do as I please. One thing I dread, and that is, what the world will say. I am mortified to death to think papa made this unfortunate engagement known."

"It would be better, perhaps, had he not; but the world shall know how it is—that I am a rejected lover. I shall then have the consolation of being pitied by bright eyes and rosy lips without number!"

She smiled—but her smile was as faint and cold as a moonbeam on snow, and she arose, to signify that their interview was at an end.

"You will excuse me, my lord; my head aches, and I'm unable to entertain you just now. As this is probably the last time we will see each other alone, I will bid you good-bye, since to-night, as betrothed lovers, we part forever."

She held out her hand. He took it in both of his, and looked sadly in her face. It was strange, now that the desire of his heart was attained, how lonely and grieved he felt.

"It is a hard word to say, Norma, and harder still to think you and I must henceforth meet as strangers."

"You may think so to-night. To-morrow you will rejoice."

"Well, be it so. Farewell, Norma."

"Adieu, my lord."

"Oh, Norma! not that. Say Alfred, as you used to, 'lang syne!'

"Good-bye, Alfred. Heaven send you some one you can love, and who will love you."

"A wish, Norma, that will never be fulfilled; but I thank you all the same. And so—"

He shook hands, and, with a last look at the pale, fair face, and tall, graceful figure, he turned, and left her alone.

And so was broken the tie that was to bind those two through life.

It was in a strange state of mind Lord Earnecliffe hurried along to rejoin his friend. Pleasure and regret, and a strange, mortified feeling were at war within, and when he entered the room where Lord Austrey lay stretched on a sofa, solacing himself with a cigar and the last *Punch*, he flung himself into a chair, and looked half moodily at the nonchalant young lord.

"Well, my beloved Damon, what news? What terrific mystery of iniquity has been brought to light? In what state of mind did you leave her peerless highness, Princess Norma?"

"Hadn't you better go on with the catechism? Ask a few more questions before you stop: What is the chief end of man? What do the Scriptures principally teach? Go on, why don't you?"

"Pshaw! what was this mysterious interview all about? If the question is impudent, don't answer it."

"Oh, I will answer it readily enough! It is something you will be very glad to hear. Her peerless highness has rejected the slave, and you behold before you a discarded suitor."

Lord Austrey half rose, and took his cigar between his finger and thumb.

"Eh? What? Just say that again, will you?"

Disbrowe laughed.

"I am discarded, rejected, refused, jilted! Is that plain enough to suit your limited capacity, my plain friend?"

Up sprang Lord Austrey to his feet, and, flinging away his cigar, he stretched out his arm, and putting on that enthusiastic expression all Othello's wear, exultingly cried:

"Excellent wench! perdition catch my soul! But I love thee; and when I love thee not, Chaos is come again!"

What's the rest, Earnecliffe? I haven't seen Othello played lately. Deuce take that cigar! I have burned my fingers."

"What a loss you are to the stage, Austrey! If Nature had not made you a British peer, you would have been a treasure beyond price, to do the high-tragedy business. Have you ever turned your thoughts to the stage as the means of earning an honest living?"

"Bah! don't talk nonsense! I want to hear all the particulars. Are you really, and truly, and seriously jilted?"

"I really, and truly, and seriously am!"

"Good! Fate has turned the cold shoulder to me ever since I was old enough to know the lady; but I felt sure she would smile at last. And she has, you see. Norma's mine!"

"Don't be too sure. She may serve you as she has me."

"No fear. The little Macdonald has better taste. But what reason did the damsel give?"

"None at all, except that I did not love her—and, faith, she hit the right thing in the middle just then. And so the engagement was broken, now and forever. I felt about three inches high at the time, I can tell you!"

"Te Deum! What a slice of good luck for George of Austrey! What is papa going to say about it?"

"Oh! she has promised to make it all right there. She will bring him to view matters in their proper light, she says. She goes abroad with the Tremain's next month."

"Better and better! I'll be an *attaché* of that embassy, or know for why. I never was properly thankful before that my maternal ancestor and Mrs. Tremain were twenty-second cousins, or something; but it just suits me exactly now! Won't I console her whom Disbrowe never named now, even in his own mind, had been always kind to him."

Therefore, in a fit of penitence, during the previous winter, he had written him a long and cordial letter, urging him to come to England, and visit him at Disbrowe Park, and bring Augusta and little Orlie with him.

"Successful! Of course I will. There is no time when a girl is more disposed to smile on a new lover than after she has discarded an old one; and, alack! a Lord George Austrey is not to be come across every day, I flatter myself. So, when Norma comes back to England, you may be ready with your congratulations, my Lord of Guilford and Earnecliffe."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SECRET SORROW.

"I have a secret sorrow here—
A grief, I'll ne'er impart;
It leaves no sigh—it sheds no tear,
But it consumes the heart."

THREE days after, Lord Earnecliffe went back to Disbrowe Park, leaving his friend in London—a constant visitor at Tremain House. Whatever Miss Macdonald felt, she had enough of the pride of Albion's stately daughters to conceal; and she rode, and walked, and drove, and went to the theater and the opera nightly; and Lord Austrey was always of their party. His distant relationship to the Tremain's stood him in good stead now, and he took care not to be too particular in his attentions, but to be quite as devoted to Emily Tremain as to Norma Macdonald. He left it to time to ripen their acquaintance to a warmer feeling. And Lord George acted wisely. A handsome face and figure, and gallant bearing, seldom fail to please ladies; and Lord George could be agreeable, not to say fascinating even, when he chose. Miss Macdonald might have the bad taste to be insensitive to his manifold attractions just at present, while the wond' her first love had received was still ranking; but there was a good time coming, and Lord George, being none of your fiery mad-headed lovers, was quite content to wait, and console himself with the maxim: "Mieux vaut tard que jamais."

And at the end of the month, having given himself an invitation to join their party, which Emily Tremain—who called him "Cousin George," and considered him delightful—had warmly seconded, they all set off together for France. Norma, too, was not displeased at this new acquisition to their party; for Lord George was an unfailing antidote against *ennui* and depression of spirits, keeping Emily Tremain especially, who had a strong natural taste for the ludicrous, in fits of laughter continually.

Just before starting, Lord George sent an epistle, rather than the short and sweet order, to his friend, to announce his success.

"And Frank," he said, "how is he?"

"Frank is quite well," said Mr. De Vere. "I got him a midshipman's commission, last winter, and he has gone off like a second Jack to seek his fortune. We found Fontelle terribly dull, and your kind invitation came at a most opportune moment. Change of climate may do something for Augusta, whose health is failing rapidly."

"I noticed De Vere was not looking well," said Disbrowe, lowering his voice so that she might not hear. "She is greatly changed since I saw her last. What is the matter?"

"That is a question I can not answer," replied her father, with a sigh. "She has no bodily ailment, the doctors say; but something is evidently preying on her mind, undermining both life and happiness. In fact, she has never been the same since that visit of old Grizelle Howlett, who has pined and faded away; and if I believed in the Evil Eye, I should say my poor Augusta was under its influence."

"Have you never tried to discover what this strange secret is?"

"Repeatedly; but in vain. Augusta only wrings her hands, and cries for me to leave her, until I have no longer the heart to resist."

"Oh, Alfred, my boy, it goes to my heart to see her suffering like this," said Mr. De Vere, with filling eyes.

Disbrowe pressed his hand in silent sympathy.

"Do you think she would tell you, Alfred? She liked you, and she might. Do you really think she would?" he said, eagerly.

"Indeed!" laughed Disbrowe. "I should have liked to have seen him. And you used to quarrel when you were both at Fontelle?"

"Oh, yes! Frank used to get so ugly sometimes—it was all his fault, you know—and we used to have such a time! We made it all up, though, you know, before he left; and Frank says we will be married as soon as ever he comes back."

"Ah! that will be pleasant—won't it?"

"When is he to come back?"

"In two or three years. That is a good long time, ain't it—but I don't mind, so long as I've got a pony. Oh, cousin Alfred, how nice you are!"

"Uncommonly so! The admirable Crich-

Saint Peter's at Rome, or risking their necks up the great Saint Bernard, or other cold and uncomfortable places in the Alpine Alps. According to his account, their travails were something in the style of the "Dodd Family Abroad"—a continued series of mishaps and misadventures, together with jealous Austrian governments, rampaging Italian beggars, savage and unreasonable couriers, or ferocious, brigandish guides, who would persist in not understanding him—Lord George—when he swore at them in English, and screamed out his directions in the same language. He further went on to express the strongest sort of contempt for the whole Continent, vehemently asserted England, with all its fogs, was the only place fit for a rational Christian to live in. As for foreign scenery, he had a poor opinion of it. The Rhine was well enough, but not fit to hold a candle to the Serpentine, and as for Baden, Ramsgate was worth a dozen of it. All this had very little interest for Disbrowe; but the postscript had, where Lord George wound up by informing him Norma was in excellent health and spirits, and "his affair" was progressing as "well as could be expected." At first, this used to invariably put Disbrowe in a fume; but he got used to it after a time, and almost as indifferent about Norma as the rest. Her father had joined them, evidently quite reconciled to the broken-off match, and with what was better still, great friends with the volatile young lord. It was quite uncertain when they would come back, but probably not until late the next autumn.

Of his American friends, since his arrival in England, he had heard nothing. As time cooled and toned down his feelings, he began to regret the hasty manner in which he had left his uncle's roof, who harshly as he had treated her whom Disbrowe never named now, even in his own mind, had been always kind to him.

Therefore, in a fit of penitence, during the previous winter, he had written him a long and cordial letter, urging him to come to England, and visit him at Disbrowe Park, and bring Augusta and little Orlie with him.

It was arranged that they should spend a week in London before proceeding further, to enable Augusta to recover from the fatigue of her journey. Mr. De Vere was busy enough during that time in receiving and returning the visits of his old friends, and at the end of the week they all set off for Disbrowe Park.

Bright and radiant in the golden glow of a June evening, the stately home of Lord Earnecliffe had never looked more beautiful. Mr. De Vere's eyes lit up with pleasure and recognition, as he saw it; Orlie clapped her hands in delight, and cried:

"Oh, how pretty!" and even Augusta's languid eyes sparkled with new and pleased animation.

"It is a beautiful place—an Arabic Fe-

lix—a garden of delight—a home for a queen!" said Mr. De Vere, in a husky voice.

Disbrowe turned away in silence. "Had Jacquette been alive?" was his thought; and a pang more bitter than he ever thought he could have felt for her again, pierced his heart.

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JILTED.

BY TOM GOULD.

They ask me why I look so sad,
While all around me seemeth glad;
Alack, that they should ask me why—
For I must answer with a sigh,
I'm jilted!

Unlucky fate for mortal man,
That blithesome, laughing maidens can
Be cruel, when they should be kind,
And serve one so—but, never mind—
I'm jilted!

She was as fair as fair could be;
She was as gentle as a dove to me?
Her beauty never can alone—
Since she has left me here to groan—
I'm jilted!

This true she had a pretty eye,
And used it well when I was by;
But oh! she fixed it on another—
Alas! that word I can not smother—
I'm jilted!

She also had a pretty face,
And was a dragon grace—
With her But with her stays
Had she a spark—and Cupid says,
I'm jilted!

Let it be so; nor ask me more;
For that's a point on which I'm sure;
Whene'er you tell it, think of me,
And softly whisper, "Why, you see,
He's jilted!"

The Ranger's Revenge.

A STORY OF COLONIAL VIRGINIA.

BY CAPTAIN CHARLES HOWARD.

The stormy debate was ended. The irresistible eloquence of Patrick Henry had carried the bitter resolutions against the odious Stamp Act, and the members of the assembly, still more or less excited over the tempestuous session, were deserting the old hall for their respective couches, for the debate had trended far into the night.

Fairfax Winthrop was the youngest member of the Virginia Assembly, and, as he emerged from the House of Burgesses, conscious of having performed a service for his native state, by supporting Henry's resolutions, a youth, whose hand clutched a riding-whip, stepped to his side.

The young assemblyman did not notice the youth in the crowd, until he uttered his name.

"Why, Courtney! what brings you hither?"

"Sad, sad tidings," replied the youth, looking up into Winthrop's face with a sad expression, and taking the young patriot's hand, he gently drew him aside.

"Yes, yes, I am the bearer of bad news," he continued.

"Well, tell it, Courtney, and do not keep me in suspense," commanded Winthrop.

"Then Estelle Hyat is—is—"

The boy faltered.

"Is what?" demanded the young man, clutching his arm until he winced with pain.

"Dead!"

"Dead?"

"Dead!"

"My God!" cried Winthrop, staggered by the dreadful and unexpected blow.

"Courtney, I can not credit you."

"Alas! I speak the truth," said the boy.

For a moment grief swayed the strong man like a storm-tossed reed, and slowly he uncovered his eyes, and looked down upon the youthful messenger, upon whose rosy cheek a tear glistened.

"When did she die, Courtney?" he asked, in tremulous tones.

"This afternoon," was the reply.

"And they wait me there?"

"Yes."

"My place is there," said the Virginian. "How lightless my future seems now. Oh, boy, it is a terrible thing to lose the only woman you ever loved!"

"Terrible!" echoed the youth.

A short time later, a man and boy were riding like the wind down a gloomy road.

Estelle Hyat was the promised bride of the young and rising assemblyman. He was the only son of a wealthy and prominent Virginian; she the sole daughter of a farmer, in humble circumstances, whose home graced the loveliest valley among the mountains.

One year prior to the inauguration of our story, Fairfax Winthrop accidentally encountered the mountain beauty, and his noble heart, untainted with the crimes of everyday life, went out to her in hallowed love.

Often, therefore, they met among the mountains, and at last he made bold to enter Harold Hyat's home as the lover of his daughter, and met a decided and unfeigned welcome.

And now, to think that the rude hand of death should strike her down upon the threshold of the fruition of hopes he had nursed so long! It was a terrible blow to the young man, and drove him, unresisting, to the precipice of insanity.

The gray streaks of dawn were illuminating the East, when the distracted lover reached the house of mourning, and Courtney Favorite led him through the silent hall into the death-chamber.

The beautiful dead was alone.

Gently the messenger approached the couch, and throwing back the coverlet, displayed the fairest face, that ever grew cold beneath the hand of the dread destroyer. A groan welled from Winthrop's heart, and bowing his head, he hid his eyes until he could calmly look upon the marble face he had often kissed in life.

At length he slowly withdrew his hand, and found himself alone—Courtney having left him alone with his dead.

He threw himself beside the couch, and kissed the cold brow of Estelle Hyat. And thus her parents found him when they entered the silent chamber.

He remained through the day at the house of death, and at nightfall mounted his steed for a ride across the mountains to his own home.

Estelle, the people said, was the victim of heart disease. She was not alone when stricken. Mark Kilton, a young mountaineer and wood-ranger—a playmate of Estelle's in childhood—sat with her in one of the chambers of her humble home. Suddenly, according to this ranger's story, she started from his side, and staggered backward with a shriek. He darted forward, caught her fragile form, and bore it, already inanimate, to the couch.

This was the substance of the ranger's narration, in which everybody put explicit faith, for he had, to all external appearances, proved himself a friend to the stricken family.

The matchless queen of night was soaring majestically toward the star-gemmed zenith, as Fairfax Winthrop rode across the mountains, with the heaviest heart that ever beat in the bosom of man.

Suddenly the sound of an approaching horse fell upon his ears, and in the center of a deep gorge, ill-lighted by the mellow rays of the moon, he drew rein, resolving to meet the horseman there.

The sounds grew more distinct, and, at length, the new-comer entered the gorge.

Fairfax Winthrop had drawn rein in the shade, which did not screen him from the sharp eyes of the night-rider, for he suddenly paused before the young assemblyman, and leveled a pistol at his head.

Then Winthrop recognized the stranger.

It was Mark Kilton, the mountaineer.

"What means this mysterious action, Mark?" demanded the patriot, to whom the ranger was well known.

"It means, sir, that I want to tell you a secret," hissed the stranger.

"A secret, Mark Kilton? And is it necessary that, during the revealing of that secret, whatever it may be, a pistol must be leveled at my head?"

"It is, sir," answered the ranger.

"Then I shall submit to the necessity."

A moment's silence followed, and the ranger leaned forward on his horse's neck.

"Fairfax Winthrop, I am leaving this country," he said.

"Never to return?"

"Never to return."

"What drives you hence?"

"Ah! that's the secret I'm going to divulge. Listen," and he lowered his voice.

"Winthrop, I loved Estelle Hyat long before you encountered her. My love was as holy as yours; but your herion and position dazzled the poor girl's eyes, and drew her from my side. I learned to hate you, and one midnight I swore that she should never wed you."

"Man, I have kept—terribly kept—that red oath. Yesterday, armed with a subtle poison, obtained from old Contine, the hermit of these mountains, I sought her side. Boldly I made known to her my intentions, and before she could shriek, I thrust the drug between her corset lips, and—and—you never heard of me."

"Well, General," he cried, "you sent for me, an' I hev come!"

"And most heartily welcome you are, Colonel," said the General, cordially.

"Colonel again," muttered Davy, aside; then, turning in his usual abrupt manner to General Houston, he said, with the utmost gravity:

"So I'm Colonel Crockett, am I?" muttered Davy, as he started forward and grasped the hand of the "Old Man," as he was usually styled.

"Well, General," he cried, "you sent for me, an' I hev come!"

"And most heartily welcome you are, Colonel," said the General, cordially.

"Colonel again," muttered Davy, aside;

"Of course Crockett and his companions were dreadfully charmed, they being totally unarmed, and hence capable of making no resistance."

In the most natural manner in the world they begged that if the Don could furnish them with weapons that he would do so, stating that they would defend the house to the last, or else cut their way through the enemy.

The morning of the fourth day after leaving Nacogdoches, found the hardy woodman dismounting in front of General Houston's tent, which had been pitched in a grove of live oak on the border of a small stream.

A sentinel was pacing back and forth before the tent, and as Crockett crossed the narrow path that had been trodden in the grass of the prairie, which marked the limits over which none might pass without order of the General himself, he was suddenly surprised by a sharply uttered—

"Halt!"

"Hullo! That means to stop perambulating what I ken from! War address in me, or war yer speakin' confidentially to yourself, young man?" asked Crockett, gravely turning to the astonished sentinel.

The latter, however, was saved the necessity of a reply, for at that moment the General, who had overheard the brief conversation, and doubtless recognized the voice, appeared from within the canvas and ordered the sentinel to pass "Colonel Crockett."

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The latter, however, was saved the necessity of a reply, for at that moment the General, who had overheard the brief conversation, and doubtless recognized the voice, appeared from within the canvas and ordered the sentinel to pass "Colonel Crockett."

"So I'm Colonel Crockett, am I?" muttered Davy, as he started forward and grasped the hand of the "Old Man," as he was usually styled.

"Well, General," he cried, "you sent for me, an' I hev come!"

"And most heartily welcome you are, Colonel," said the General, cordially.

"Colonel again," muttered Davy, aside;

"Of course Crockett and his companions were dreadfully charmed, they being totally unarmed, and hence capable of making no resistance."

In the most natural manner in the world they begged that if the Don could furnish them with weapons that he would do so, stating that they would defend the house to the last, or else cut their way through the enemy.

The morning of the fourth day after leaving Nacogdoches, found the hardy woodman dismounting in front of General Houston's tent, which had been pitched in a grove of live oak on the border of a small stream.

A sentinel was pacing back and forth before the tent, and as Crockett crossed the narrow path that had been trodden in the grass of the prairie, which marked the limits over which none might pass without order of the General himself, he was suddenly surprised by a sharply uttered—

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